

## **Book Review:**

### **First Book:**

**Title:** *Quick Results with the Output Delivery System*

**Author:** Sunil Gupta

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### **Companion Templates:**

**Title:** *Instant ODS-Style Templates for the SAS Output Delivery System*

**Author:** Bernadette Johnson

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### **Reviewer: Lesley Harschnitz**

Lesley Harschnitz works at a large Canadian manufacturing company and is a current member of the Executive Toronto-Area SAS Society. Please note that the following review represents only the opinion of the reviewer and not that of any organization or company to which she has an affiliation.

#### **Review (*Quick Results with the Output Delivery System*):**

This is an excellent introduction to using the Output Delivery System (ODS). The book is well-organized, easy-to-read and contains all the basic information needed to get started with ODS. Sunil Gupta presents the material clearly and in such a way that it logically progresses through the steps a beginner would need in using ODS. Gupta is especially good at presenting clear example code with easy-to-follow notes. Although a relatively short book (about 100 pages), it thoroughly covers the subject at the beginner level.

Before going into the contents of the specific chapters, it seems wise to include a small glossary of terms for those who are not familiar with the Output Delivery System. The Output Delivery System is a part of Base SAS that can be used to generate reports in various formats. It is generally referred to as *ODS*. Using ODS, reports can be written to a number of *destinations*. Currently, destinations include HTML (Web page), RTF (rich text document), PDF (portable document), other formats for printers and the standard SAS output format. ODS reports are composed of a number of *objects*. Every SAS procedure generates a number of report objects that can then be specifically controlled using ODS.

Chapter 1 begins with some basic definitions and syntax for using ODS. By the end of this chapter, you should have an idea as to where ODS can best be used to give you better results from your SAS output.

Chapter 2 gets immediately into the functions of ODS. What report destinations are available? What types of report can I create? How do I add a table of contents to an HTML report? How do I put a graph in a report? These questions are all answered, with examples, in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 gets into fine-tuning the reports. It shows how to select only portions (specific objects) of the normal SAS output and place them in the report. It also shows how to follow what ODS is doing within a report to create a better report that has exactly what you need.

Chapter 4 shows how to use the output functionality within ODS to create specific SAS data sets. Chapter 5 goes further into working with report objects, especially the multiple objects created with BY processing and multiple analysis variables. By the end of this chapter, you should be comfortable writing a standard report to any allowed destination.

Chapter 6 talks very briefly about using report styles. Each ODS report uses a default style that specifies how the output looks on the screen or page. As expected, SAS allows you to create your own styles, or provides a series of style templates. This was the only section that could have been a little bit more detailed.

While the default styles in ODS are pretty good, I have found that it doesn't take long before you are looking for more.

Overall though, this book will get the beginning user of ODS up and running quickly to produce some really nice reports. It is well-written, easy to understand and short enough to be helpful without being overwhelming.

**Review** (*Instant ODS- Style Templates for the SAS Output Delivery System*):

This "book" actually comes as a CD with about 50 prepared templates for the various ODS formats. The CD also contains an instruction book and the SAS programs required to use the templates. These templates are well-prepared and can save a lot of work in producing quality ODS output quickly.

Bernadette Johnson has created a wide range of flexible and well-designed templates for use with SAS ODS. It took about 30 minutes for me to follow these templates and start producing ODS output.

When I was using these templates, I did find that it was important to use the right SAS program for the template. Using an incorrect program can lead to a fatal error (obviously, a very bad thing), and the need to restart SAS. Also, I did find that some of the colors on the template did not map exactly to my computer, probably due to the capabilities and settings on the video card.

If you purchase these templates, I would recommend that you print the instruction book in colour right away. A colour printout will allow you to easily match the required program to the selected template and give a good view of what to expect in the output.

If the instructions are followed precisely, these templates provide excellent value for the cost of the CD, and are a first-rate companion to *Quick Results with ODS* to get started producing output in the various formats.